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ABSTRACT

Students enrolled in three school districts in Northern Illinois were investigated to determine the relationship between the self-esteem of selected groups of intermediate grade children and their attitude toward reading, in terms of their sex, grade level, classification of school, and various combinations of these factors. Data was collected by means of two self-report instruments, i.e., the Coppersmith Self-Esteem Inventory (SEI) and the San Diego County Inventory of Reading Attitude (IRA). Each of the twenty-one classes used was tested within a three week period. Findings demonstrated that: (1) a child's attitude toward reading is positively related to self-esteem, (2) perceptions boys have of themselves in relation to peers and parents seem less related to their attitude toward reading than do their general and academic self-esteem, (3) correlations are highly significant at the fifth grade level, and (4) for each sex and at each grade level the child's self-awareness in the academic setting is related to his attitude toward reading. (Appended are several correlation tables and a bibliography.) (HS)

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A STUDY OF THE RELATIONSHIP OF INTERMEDIATE-GRADE CHILDREN'S SELF-ESTEEM AND THEIR ATTITUDE TOWARD READING

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Introduction

In recent years much time, effort, and money has been spent exploring methods of teaching the basic skills of reading; yet, the important question of whether or not a child will read on his own once he has mastered these skills has received little attention. Concerning this Charlotte Huck said, "Our schools have failed miserably in helping boys and girls develop the habit of reading. In many instances we have developed an illiterate group of literates--adults who know how to read but do not read." (8:250) Concerned with the same issue, Harris asked, "Of what value is it to develop skillful readers, if the skill is used to little purpose in adult years?" (10:452)

Some educators investigating the problem of teaching reading skills to children have been influenced by Snygg and Comb's notion

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of the "circular effect of the phenomenal self in relation to reading." (4:152) Consequently, numerous studies have been made of the relationship between children's self-esteem and their reading achievement. (1, 2, 3, 6, 11, 12, 15, 16, 18)

Realizing that positive attitudes toward reading, as well as lasting habits of reading, do not come about as a result of direct lessons in the skills of reading, investigators have attempted to study those conditions which seem to be influential in the formation of such positive attitudes. (9, 13, 14, 19, 20)

In light of previous research, the present study sought to investigate the relationship between children's self-esteem and their attitude toward reading.

Method

Sample

The sample consisted of 476 fourth, fifth, and sixth grade students who were enrolled in three selected school districts in northern Illinois, one urban, one suburban, and one rural. From these districts twenty-one classrooms were selected according to the following criteria: (1) the students were members of self-contained classrooms; (2) the students were heterogeneously grouped; and (3) the students were representative of other fourth, fifth, and sixth grade students in the district. From an examination of Table 1, it can be seen that the sample was evenly distributed in regard to classification of school, sex, and grade level.

Table 1

Distribution of Students in Sample

Classification of School	Grade 4 Boys	Grade 4 Girls	Grade 4 Total	Grade 5 Boys	Grade 5 Girls	Grade 5 Total	Grade 6 Boys	Grade 6 Girls	Grade 6 Total	Totals Boys	Totals Girls	Totals Total
Urban	29	23	52	22	32	54	23	35	58	74	90	164
Suburban	26	23	49	30	31	61	19	27	46	75	81	156
Rural	26	21	47	30	35	65	25	19	44	81	75	156
Totals	81	67	148	82	98	180	67	81	148	230	246	476

Instruments

The instruments used in this study were the Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory (SEI) and the San Diego County Inventory of Reading Attitude (IRA). (7, 17) Both are self-report measures of the paper-pencil type.

Made up of fifty items, the SEI is concerned with the subject's self-esteem in relation to his peers (social self-esteem), to his parents (parental self-esteem), to his school situation (academic self-esteem), and to himself (general self-esteem). (6) By means of the test-retest method, Coopersmith found the reliability of the SEI to be .88. It was also reported that teacher observations of the subjects' behavior correlated highly with the SEI scores. (5:5)

A twenty-five item questionnaire, the IRA, was found to have a reliability coefficient of .79, obtained by the split halves method. (17:8) Furthermore, independent teacher judgments of reading attitude were used as a validity criterion in the construction of this instrument. (17:8,9)

Procedure

Approval for conducting this investigation was secured from the superintendents of the selected school districts and each superintendent was asked to designate a school that was representative of those in the district. Further arrangements were made through the principals of the schools for selection of fourth, fifth, and sixth grade classrooms, as well as scheduling and testing dates. Each of the twenty-one classes was tested by

the investigator within a period of three weeks.

Analysis and Findings

The relationship between intermediate-grade children's reading attitude and their self-esteem was examined by testing five major hypotheses and their accompanying four sub- hypotheses. For the purpose of this study, the statistical method selected was the Pearson product-moment correlation technique, with the level of significance for rejecting the null hypotheses set at .05.

As can be seen in Table 2, the correlations of the scores received on the IRA and the scores obtained on the SEI, S_1, S_2, S_3, and S_4 were all significant at the .001 level. Therefore, the five major hypotheses were rejected. That is, there were significant positive correlations between the expressed attitudes toward reading of these children and their total, general, social, parental, and academic self-esteem.

Table 2

Correlations Between IRA and SEI, S_1, S_2, S_3, and S_4 for the Total Group

Variable	N = 476
Total Self-Esteem (SEI)	.273***
General Self-Esteem (S_1)	.183***
Social Self-Esteem (S_2)	.166***
Parental Self-Esteem (S_3)	.213***
Academic Self-Esteem (S_4)	.358***

***Significant at the .001 level.

The first group of sub- hypotheses stated that, regardless of sex, no relationship existed between the scores received on the IRA and those received on the total SEI and its four subscales.

As shown in Table 3, when the boys' and girls' scores were considered separately, it was found that the IRA scores correlated significantly with the SEI scores and its four subscales. Since all these correlations were significant at the .05 level or better, this group of sub- hypotheses was also rejected.

Table 3

Correlations Between IRA and SEI
S_1, S_2, S_3, and S_4 for Each Sex

Variable	Boys (N = 230)	Girls (N = 246)
SEI	.260***	.343***
S_1	.203***	.247***
S_2	.128*	.200***
S_3	.164**	.308***
S_4	.340***	.382***

***Significant at the .001 level.
**Significant at the .01 level.
*Significant at the .05 level.

The second group of sub-hypotheses tested the relationship in terms of the subjects' grade level. As can be seen in Table 4,

there was a significant relationship between the IRA scores and and the total, general, and academic scores, regardless of grade level. However, this was not true in the case of the IRA scores and the social and parental scores. Therefore, these two subhypotheses were accepted. It should also be noted at this point that the scores received by the fifth graders have consistently high correlations.

Table 4

Correlations Between IRA and SEI, S_1, S_2, S_3, and S_4, for Each Grade Level

Variable	Grade 4 (N = 148)	Grade 5 (N = 16[illegible])	Grade 6 (N= 148)
SEI	.214**	.350***	.241**
S_1	.161*	.258***	.146*
S_2	.093	.243***	.152*
S_3	.123	.260***	.249***
S_4	.309***	.422***	.286***

***Significant at the .001 level.
**Significant at the .01 level.
*Significant at the .05 level.

The third group of sub-hypotheses were formulated to test the correlations in terms of the subjects' sex and grade level. Table 5 indicates that the IRA scores were significantly related to the total scores and to the academic scores; thus, these two sub-hypotheses were rejected. Since the correlations between the

Table 5

Correlations Between IRA and SEI,
S_1, S_2, S_3, and S_4 for Each Grade Level and Sex

Variable	Grade 4		Grade 5		Grade 6	
	Boys (N = 81)	Girls (N = 67)	Boys (N = 82)	Girls (N = 98)	Boys (N = 67)	Girls (N = 81)
SEI	.215*	.344**	.265**	.435***	.309**	.253*
S_1	.140	.339**	.248*	.312***	.246*	.147
S_2	.080	.155	.037	.370***	.311**	.034
S_3	.168	.121	.185*	.355***	.161	.389***
S_4	.350***	.289**	.332***	.484***	.277*	.295**

***Significant at the .001 level.
**Significant at the .01 level.
*Significant at the .05 level.

IRA scores and the other subscales were not consistent over grade level and sex, the null sub-hypotheses in these cases were accepted.

When the scores were considered in terms of classification of school, grade level, and sex, none of these correlations were consistently significant over each of these factors. Therefore, each of the null sub-hypotheses were accepted. However, Tables 6, 7, and 8 do provide some indication of trends.

Summary and Discussion

Within the limitations of this study, it has been demonstrated that: (1) The intermediate-grade child's attitude toward reading is positively related to his self-esteem. (2) Perceptions boys have of themselves in relation to their peers and their parents seems less related to their attitude toward reading than do their general and academic self-esteem. (3) Fifth grade is the level at which all the correlations are most highly significant. (4) At each grade level and for each sex the perceptions the child has of himself in the academic setting is significantly related to his attitude toward reading.

Though the claim is not made for a perfect cause-and-effect relationship, it can be seen that these findings have serious implications for the teaching of reading to intermediate-grade children. If a child feels personal inadequacy when involved in the academic setting, it is highly improbable that he will have

Table 7

Correlations Between IRA and SEI,
S_1, S_2, S_3, and S_4 for Urban Subjects, by Grade and Sex

Variable	Grade 4 Boys (N = 29)	Grade 4 Girls (N= 23)	Grade 5 Boys (N = 22)	Grade 5 Girls (N = 32)	Grade 6 Boys (N=23	Grade 6 Girls (N = 35)
SEI	.293	.033	.438*	.513***	.313	-.039
S_1	.240	.106	.509**	.201	.244	-.106
S_2	.196	-.053	-.019	.354*	.292	-.024
S_3	.040	-.183	.280	.542***	-.120	.141
S_4	.468**	.096	.529**	.660***	.532**	-.044

***Significant at the .001 level.
**Significant at the .01 level.
*Significant at the .05 level.

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Table 8

Correlations Between IRA and SEI,
S_1, S_2, S_3, and S_4 for Suburban Subjects, by Grade and Sex

Variable	Grade 4		Grade 5		Grade 6	
	Boys (N = 29)	Girls (N = 23)	Boys (N = 30)	Girls (N = 31)	Boys (N = 19)	Girls (N = 27)
SEI	.253	.491**	.379*	.495**	.486*	.602***
S_1	.205	.500**	.303	.368*	.560**	.536**
S_2	.131	.198	.213	.582***	.361	.264
S_3	.383*	.309	.259	.242	.396*	.491**
S_4	.167	.158	.474**	.474**	.092	.661**

***Significant at the .001 level.
**Significant at the .01 level.
*Significant at the .05 level.

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Table 9

Correlations Between IRA and SEI,
S_1, S_2, S_3, and S_4 for Rural Subjects, by Grade and Sex

Variable	Grade 4		Grade 5		Grade 6	
	Boys (N = 26)	Girls (N = 21)	Boys (N = 30)	Girls (N = 35)	Boys (N = 25)	Girls (N = 19)
SEI	.298	.516**	.061	.411**	.621***	.446
S_1	.223	.630***	.072	.420**	.394*	.319
S_2	-.005	.275	-.036	.284*	.620***	.309
S_3	.239	-.025	.096	.297*	.514**	.398*
S_4	.421*	.523**	.010	.406**	.513**	.523*

***Significant at the .001 level.
**Significant at the .01 level.
*Significant at the .05 level.

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developed favorable attitudes toward those curricular subjects which pose a threat to his self-image. Time and again reading has functioned in this capacity. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the reading teacher to develop not only a worthwhile program in reading, but also a program in which the child can realize his worth.

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Abstract

Bibliography — A Study of the Relationship Between Intermediate-Grade Children's Self-Esteem and Their Attitude Toward Reading
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Purpose — Investigates the relationship between the self-esteem of selected groups of intermediate-grade children and their attitude toward reading, in terms of the subjects' sex, grade level, classification of school, and specified combinations of these factors

Methods — The data were collected by means of two self-report instruments, the Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory (SEI) and the San Diego County Inventory of Reading Attitude (IRA). Both instruments were administered by the investigator within a three week period during April, 1971. Using the Pearson product-moment correlation technique, the subjects' scores on the SEI and its four subscales were correlated with their scores on the IRA.

Conclusions — Statistical analysis of the data revealed that self-esteem was related to attitude toward reading. Furthermore, the perceptions children had of themselves in regard to the school setting were highly correlated with their attitude toward reading, regardless of sex and/or grade level. Therefore, it was recommended that teachers develop reading programs in which children's worth can be realized.

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